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REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-4 and 6-22 are pending. Claims 1, 4, 7, 9, 10, 12 and 17 are amended. Claims 2 and 5 are canceled. New Claims 19-22 have been added. In addition, the Abstract of the Disclosure is amended to correct a typographical error.

The objection to Claim 5 has been obviated by cancellation of said claim.

The objection to the Abstract of the Disclosure has been obviated by amending the Abstract to include a period at the end of the Abstract.

The rejection of Claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(b) as being anticipated by WO 99/28363 has been obviated by amending Claim 1 to include all the limitations of Claim 5, which the Examiner has determined to be allowable, and by canceling Claim 2. As Claims 3 and 4 depend from newly amended Claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims now also define allowable subject matter.

Claims 7 and 12-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schneider et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,333,094) in view of Henkel (WO 99/28363). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested in view of the amendments to the claims and the following remarks.

The Schneider reference discloses a multilayer thermoformable composite synthetic veneer film. The veneer film comprises "at least one base film or base layer of polyolefin or comprising polyolefin" (column 2, lines 65-66) and a "bonding layer, adhesion-promoting layer or reactant layer arranged below the base film or base layer" (column 3, lines 14-16), with the latter layer being between the base film or base layer and the substrate to which the veneer film is being applied. In the figures of the reference, (2) represents the base film or base layer, while (1) represents the bonding layer, adhesion-promoting layer or reactant layer. The veneer film may be bonded to the substrate using an adhesive or glue such as a hot melt adhesive or a "2-part adhesive or glue (PU)" (column 8, lines 12-22).

Applicants' Claim 7 has been amended to recite a "method for gluing a film consisting essentially of at least one poly(meth)acrylate to a substrate". This film corresponds in function to the base film or base layer (2) of the Schneider veneer film, yet is quite different with respect to its chemical composition. According to the Schneider reference, the base film or base layer must comprise polyolefin, while Applicants' film consists essentially of at least one poly(meth)acrylate (i.e., is essentially free of polyolefin).

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It has heretofore been difficult to form weather-resistant laminates from films consisting essentially of poly(meth)acrylate using conventional hot melt adhesives, as mentioned in the paragraph beginning at page 3, line 35, of Applicants' specification.

The Schneider reference teaches that a bonding layer, adhesion-promoting layer or reactant layer (1) must be utilized in order to achieve satisfactory attachment of a base layer comprised of polyolefin to a substrate using an adhesive or glue. It provides no guidance whatsoever with regard to the problem of bonding a base layer consisting essentially of poly(meth)acrylate to a substrate so as to form a weather-resistant bond. In particular, the reference does not teach or suggest any specific type of adhesive or glue that might be appropriate for such application.

A worker of ordinary skill in the art would not have found it obvious from the disclosure of the Henkel reference to select or adapt any of the adhesives taught therein for use in the particular application which is the subject of Claim 7, i.e., the bonding of a base film consisting essentially of poly(meth)acrylate to a substrate comprised of a thermoplastic, wood, or aluminum. That is, although the Henkel reference indicates that the hot melt adhesives taught therein "can be readily adapted to a variety of applications where hotmelts are commonly used" and points out that such adhesives have improved heat resistance, moisture resistance and solvent resistance (page 18, first full paragraph), their use in laminating poly(meth)acrylate films to such substrates is not mentioned or suggested. The worker of ordinary skill in the art therefore would have had no reason to suspect that the hot melt adhesives of the Henkel reference would provide exceptionally good performance when utilized with base films of this type. Put a different way, the Henkel reference would not have reasonably led such worker to select this particular type of hot melt adhesive from among the many known types of hot melt adhesives for use in this specific laminating application (i.e., joining a poly(meth)acrylate base film to a thermoplastic, wood or aluminum substrate).

The Examiner's attention is directed to the working examples of Applicants' specification, wherein the unexpected superiority of the hot melt, moisture-curing adhesives recited in Claim 7 in bonding poly(meth)acrylate base films to substrates as compared to other hot melt adhesives is demonstrated.

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Claims 7-9 stand rejected as unpatentable over Fields et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,440,546) in view of Henkel (WO 99/28363). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested in view of the claim amendments and the following remarks.

The Fields reference teaches flexible, weatherable decorative sheet material comprising a thermoformable decorative paint film having an inner surface and a weatherable, low gloss outer surface suitable for forming an exterior finish for a part (abstract). The Examiner has noted that Figures 4-5 illustrate sheet materials comprising color coats, clear coats, adhesives, and a thermoformable backing. She has further pointed out the disclosure of column 6, line 26, through column 7, line 15 and the example. "Acrylic polymers" are mentioned as possible components of the clear coats and color coats. It is also noted that the adhesives used may include "urethane adhesives", although the Examiner has admitted that the reference does not disclose the specific adhesive composition recited in Applicants' Claim 7. In particular, the reference does not teach or suggest the use of a hot melt adhesive or a moisture-curing adhesive or a hot melt, moisture-curing adhesive. Instead, the reference proposes using a solvent-borne adhesive, as indicated by the teaching that the adhesive layer which is applied must be dried (see column 9, lines 10-13). It thus would not have been obvious to a worker of ordinary skill in the art to substitute a moisture-curing, hot melt adhesive, such as the type recited in Applicants' claims.

The Henkel reference would not have supplied the worker of ordinary skill in the art with the motivation necessary to modify the process taught by the Fields reference so as to arrive at Applicants' claimed invention. In particular, the Henkel reference does not suggest selecting or adapting any of the adhesives taught therein for use in the particular application which is the subject of Claim 7, i.e., the bonding of a base film consisting essentially of poly(meth)acrylate to a substrate comprised of a thermoplastic, wood, or aluminum. That is, although the Henkel reference indicates that the hot melt adhesives taught therein "can be readily adapted to a variety of applications where hotmelts are commonly used" and points out that such adhesives have improved heat resistance, moisture resistance and solvent resistance (page 18, first full paragraph), their use in laminating poly(meth)acrylate films to such substrates is not mentioned or suggested. The worker of ordinary skill in the art therefore would have had no basis for believing that the hot melt adhesives of the Henkel reference would provide exceptionally good performance when utilized with base films of

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this type. Put a different way, the Henkel reference would not have reasonably led such worker to select this particular type of moisture-curing, hot melt adhesive from among the many known types of urethane adhesives for use in this specific laminating application (i.e., joining a poly(meth)acrylate base film to a thermoplastic, wood or aluminum substrate). The Examiner is again invited to review the working examples in Applicants' specification, which demonstrate the unexpected advantages of using the moisture curing, hot melt adhesives recited in Claim 7 in this particular application as compared to other types of adhesives.

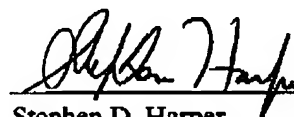
Claim 16 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schneider et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,333,094) in view of Henkel (WO 99/28363) as applied to Claims 7 and 12-15 above, and further in view of Kokrhanek (U.S. Pat. No. 4,743,509). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested in view of the claim amendments and the following arguments.

The Schneider and Henkel references have been previously discussed in connection with the rejection of Claim 12, from which Claim 16 depends. The subject matter of Claim 12 is believed by Applicants to be patentable over these references for the reasons previously explained. Claim 16 should therefore also be considered to define patentable subject matter. It is further noted that the thermoplastic contact adhesive layers of the Kokrhanek reference are formed from solvent-borne adhesives (see column 4, lines 16-17, column 5, lines 48-55), not from moisture-curing, hot melt adhesives as required by Applicants' claims. Additionally, the contact adhesives of the Kokrhanek do not contain polyurethane prepolymers bearing reactive NCO groups, as also required by Applicants' claims. In view of these fundamental differences in the type of adhesive being used, a worker of ordinary skill in the art would not have found it obvious to apply a primer to the surface of the shaped article when utilizing the particular moisture-curing, hot melt adhesive set forth in Applicants' Claim 16.

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In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, an early Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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